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THE UNCANNY
X-MEN™
ENTER-- THE STARJAMMERS!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE X-MEN!

PURSUIT!

A CLAREMONT ✗ COCKRUM ✗ WIACEK ✗ CHIANG ✗ WARFIELD ✗ JONES ✗ SHOOTER PRODUCTION

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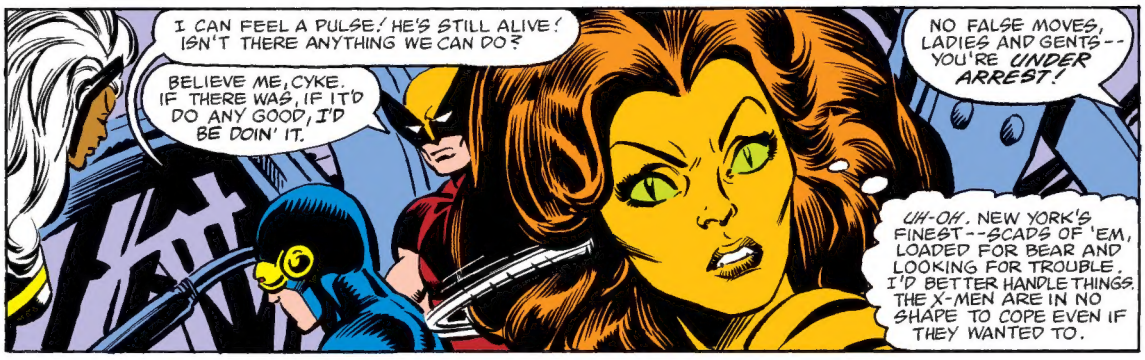
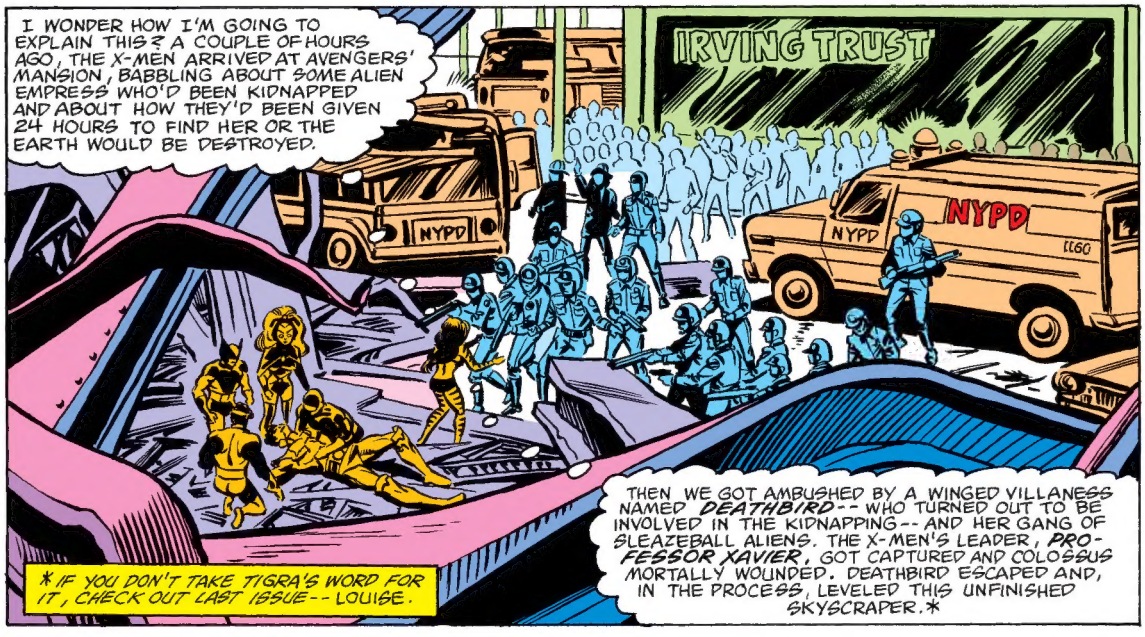

I CAN FEEL A PULSE! HE'S STILL ALIVE! ISN'T THERE ANYTHING WE CAN DO?
BELIEVE ME, CYKE. IF THERE WAS, IF IT'D DO ANY GOOD, I'D BE DOIN' IT.
NO FALSE MOVES, LADIES AND GENTS--YOU'RE UNDER ARREST!
UH-OH. NEW YORK'S FINEST--SCADS OF 'EM, LOADED FOR BEAR AND LOOKING FOR TROUBLE. I'D BETTER HANDLE THINGS. THE X-MEN ARE IN NO SHAPE TO COPE EVEN IF THEY WANTED TO.

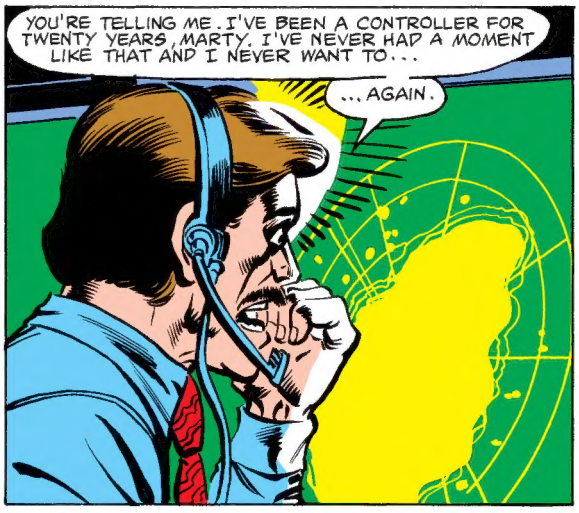

I WONDER HOW I'M GOING TO EXPLAIN THIS? A COUPLE OF HOURS AGO, THE X-MEN ARRIVED AT AVENGERS' MANSION, BABBLING ABOUT SOME ALIEN EMPRESS WHO'D BEEN KIDNAPPED AND ABOUT HOW THEY'D BEEN GIVEN 24 HOURS TO FIND HER OR THE EARTH WOULD BE DESTROYED.
IRVING TRUST
NYPD
NYPD
NYPD
THEN WE GOT AMBUSHED BY A WINGED VILLANESS NAMED DEATHBIRD--WHO TURNED OUT TO BE INVOLVED IN THE KIDNAPPING--AND HER GANG OF SLEAZEBALL ALIENS. THE X-MEN'S LEADER, PROFESSOR XAVIER, GOT CAPTURED AND COLOSSUS MORTALLY WOUNDED. DEATHBIRD ESCAPED AND, IN THE PROCESS, LEVELED THIS UNFINISHED SKYSCRAPER.*
* IF YOU DON'T TAKE TIGRA'S WORD FOR IT, CHECK OUT LAST ISSUE--LOUISE.

WHEW!
I WAS THERE AND EVEN I HAVE TROUBLE BELIEVING MY STORY.
I CAN EXPLAIN OFFICERS, IF YOU'LL LET ME.

I'M TIGRA, ONE OF THE AVENGERS.*
SO WHAT?
YOU CAN'T ARREST US. MY...ASSOCIATES AND I WERE DOING OUR JOB, BATTLING A NOTORIOUS SUPER-VILLAIN.
*THIS STORY TAKES PLACE BEFORE AVENGERS #216, IN WHICH TIGRA QUIT THE GROUP--L.

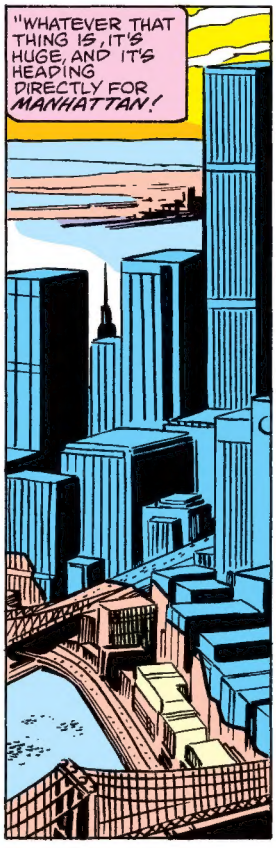
GIMME A BREAK, WILLYA, LADY? YOU CLOWNS JUST TRASHED A TWO HUNDRED MILLION DOLLAR PROJECT. IT'S A MIRACLE NO ONE WAS KILLED.
LOOK AGAIN, FELLA. SOMEONE WAS.
OH. I'M SORRY, TRULY. BUT SOMEONE HAS TO BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE FOR THIS MESS--AND YOU PEOPLE ARE IT!

AT ROUGHLY THE SAME MOMENT, IN THE F.A.A'S REGIONAL AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTER ON NEARBY LONG ISLAND...
MORNING, ROY. HOW'S LIFE ON THE GRAVEYARD SHIFT?
PRETTY DULL, TONIGHT, PHIL.
YEAH, NO COMPARISON TO THE OTHER DAY WHEN YOU SPOTTED THAT UFO.* PRETTY HAIRY, OL' BUDDY.
* X-MEN #154--L.

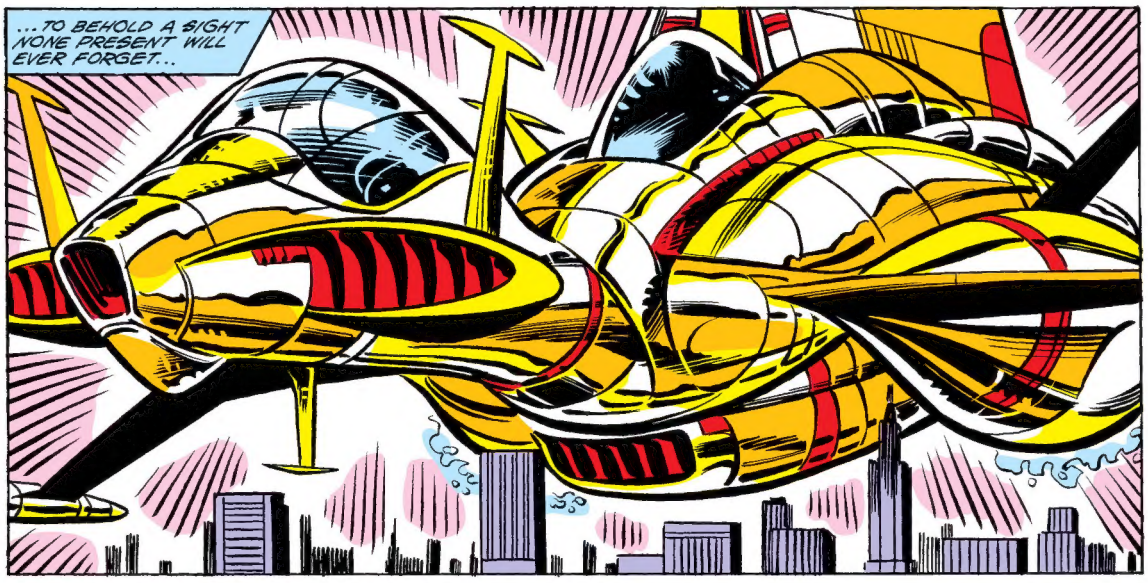

YOU'RE TELLING ME. I'VE BEEN A CONTROLLER FOR TWENTY YEARS, MARTY. I'VE NEVER HAD A MOMENT LIKE THAT AND I NEVER WANT TO...
...AGAIN.

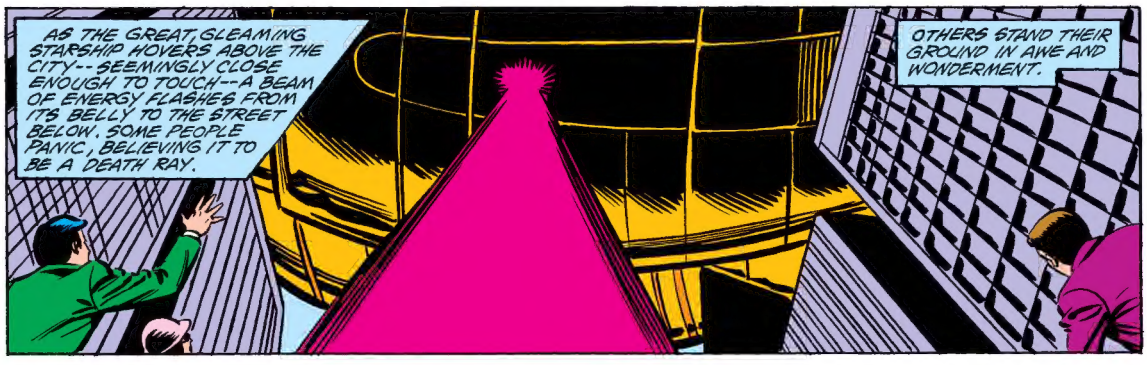
PHIL!
ROY, HE TOOK ONE LOOK AT HIS SCREEN AN' KEELED OVER-- GOOD LORD! TH-THAT BLIP! IS IT A MALFUNCTION?
I WISH IT WAS. I'LL TAKE CARE OF PHIL, MARTY.
YOU GET BACK TO YOUR CONSOLE.

"I WANT EVERY AIRCRAFT VECTORED OUT OF THE NEW YORK AREA--FAST!

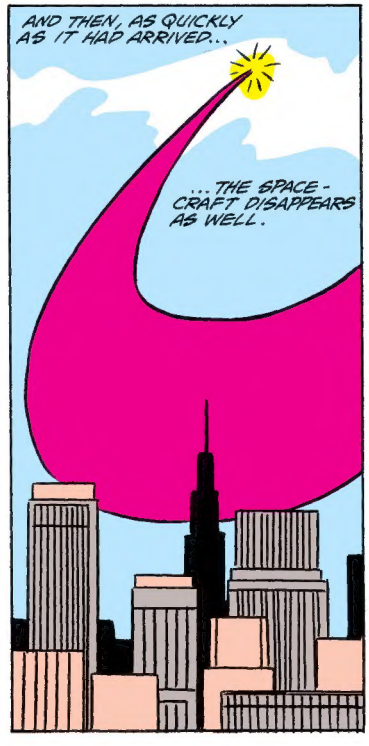

"WHATEVER THAT THING IS, IT'S HUGE, AND IT'S HEADING DIRECTLY FOR MANHATTAN!

DESPITE THE LATE HOUR, A CONSIDERABLE CROWD HAS GATHERED AT THE CORNER OF 57TH AND MADISON, IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE X-MEN'S BATTLE. NOW, AS THE MOON AND STARS ARE BLOTTED OUT AND THE AIR GROWS SUDDENLY, STRANGELY STILL, ALL EYES TURN UPWARDS...


...TO BEHOLD A SIGHT NONE PRESENT WILL EVER FORGET...


AS THE GREAT, GLEAMING STARSHIP HOVERS ABOVE THE CITY--SEEMINGLY CLOSE ENOUGH TO TOUCH--A BEAM OF ENERGY FLASHES FROM ITS BELLY TO THE STREET BELOW. SOME PEOPLE PANIC, BELIEVING IT TO BE A DEATH RAY.
OTHERS STAND THEIR GROUND IN AWE AND WONDERMENT.

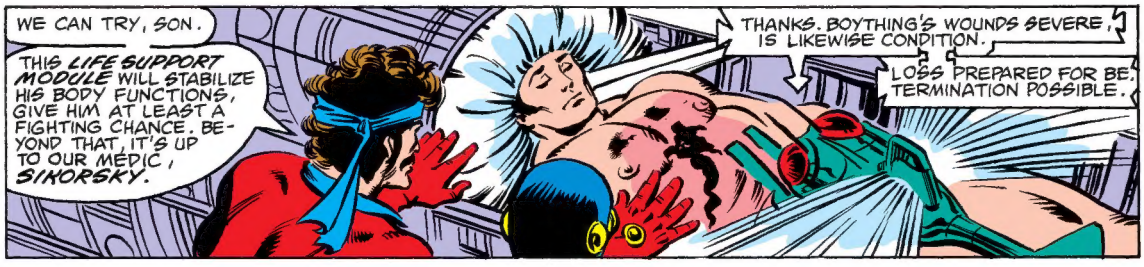
THE BEAM ENVELOPES CORSAIR AND THE FOUR X-MEN. THEY DISAPPEAR.
STOP 'EM, ARNIE!
I'M GAME, LOU. HOW?!?


AND THEN, AS QUICKLY AS IT HAD ARRIVED...
...THE SPACE-CRAFT DISAPPEARS AS WELL.

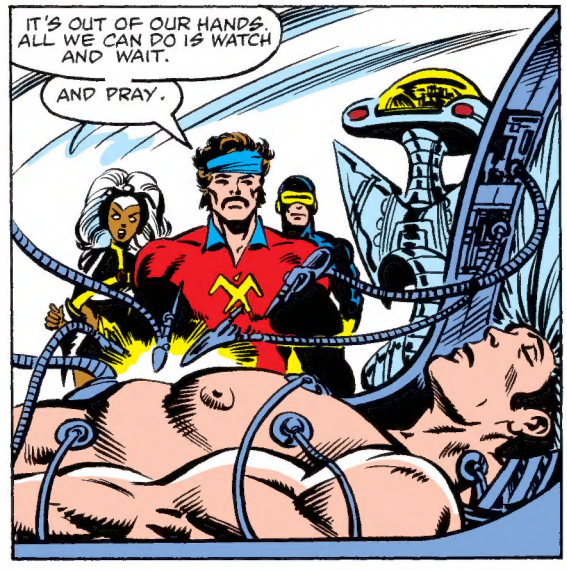
ARNIE, HOW WE GONNA REPORT THIS?
PARTNER, I AIN'T EVEN GONNA TRY.
GOOD LUCK, X-MEN. I'VE A FEELING YOU'LL NEED IT.
I...I WISH I COULD HAVE GONE WITH YOU.

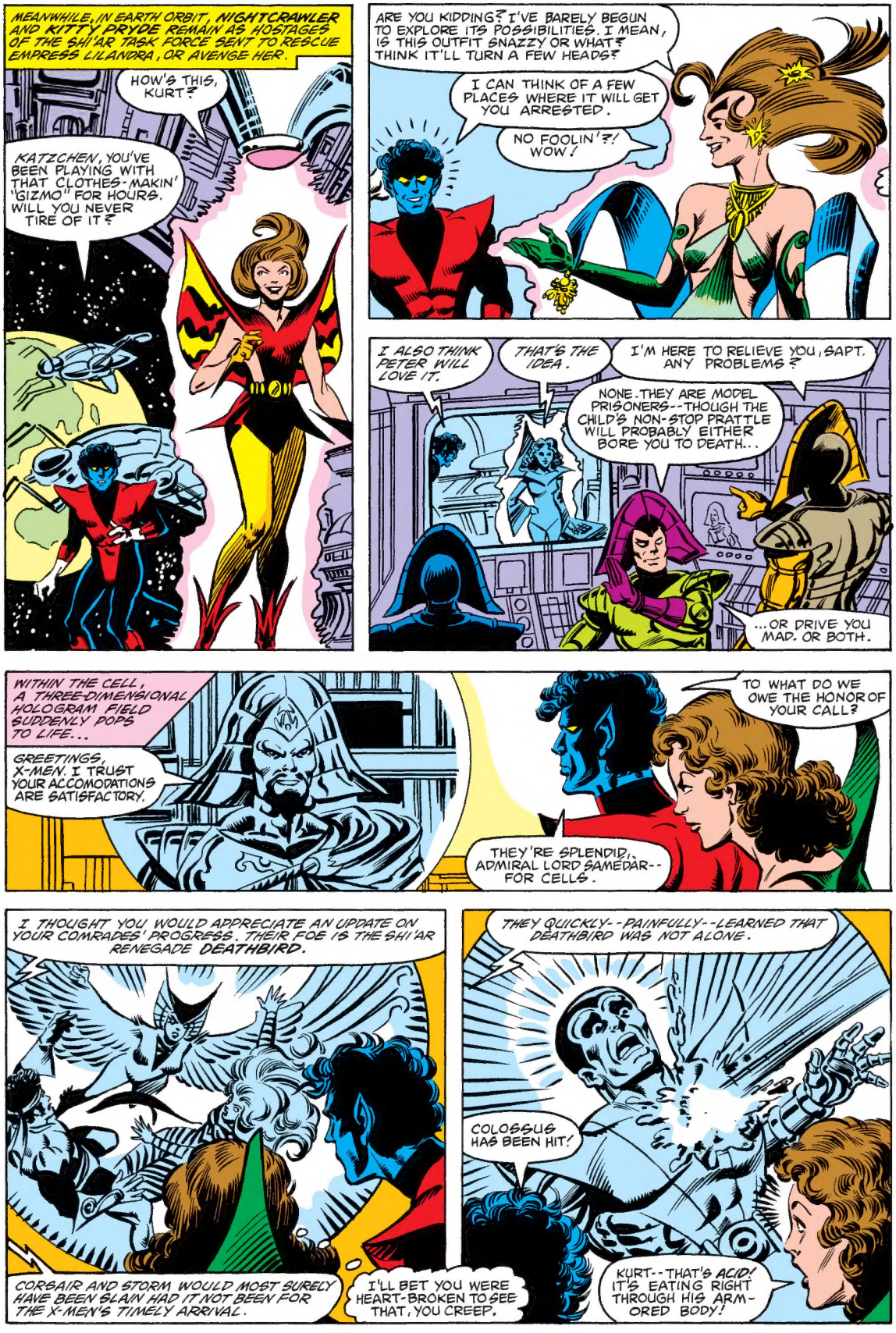
ALL THINGS CONSIDERED, TROOPS, WE'VE EITHER JUST BEEN TELEPORTED OUTTA THE FRYIN' PAN AN' INTO THE PROVERBIAL FIRE...
...OR WE'VE JUST BEEN SAVED.

IT IS MOST ASSUREDLY THE LATTER, MY SMALL TERRAN FRIEND.
THE STARJAMMERS!
WELCOME HOME, CORSAIR! IT GLADDENS MY HEART TO SEE YOU!
CHOD! BUT YOU WERE SURROUNDED--TRAPPED--BY IMPERIAL MARINES! HOW DID YOU ESCAPE?
MIRACULOUSLY, OF COURSE.
CORSAIR, COLOSSUS IS DYING! CAN YOUR CREW HELP HIM?


WE CAN TRY, SON.
THIS LIFE SUPPORT MODULE WILL STABILIZE HIS BODY FUNCTIONS, GIVE HIM AT LEAST A FIGHTING CHANCE. BEYOND THAT, IT'S UP TO OUR MEDIC, SIKORSKY.
THANKS. BOYTHING'S WOUNDS SEVERE, IS LIKEWISE CONDITION.
LOSS PREPARED FOR BE. TERMINATION POSSIBLE.

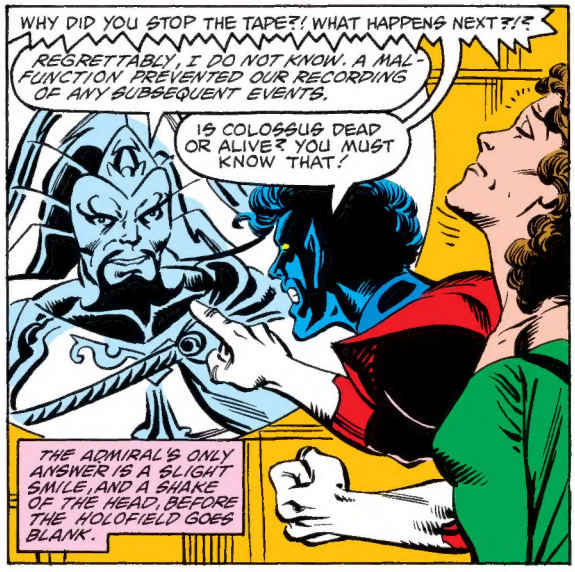
HE CAN'T DIE! I WON'T LET HIM DIE!
ARE YOU GOD, THEN, THAT YOU CAN PREVENT IT?
I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL, SCOTT. I'VE STOOD HELPLESS OVER THE BODIES OF FRIENDS--AND LOVED ONES--WISHING, BEGGING, DEMANDING THE POWER TO SAVE THEM.

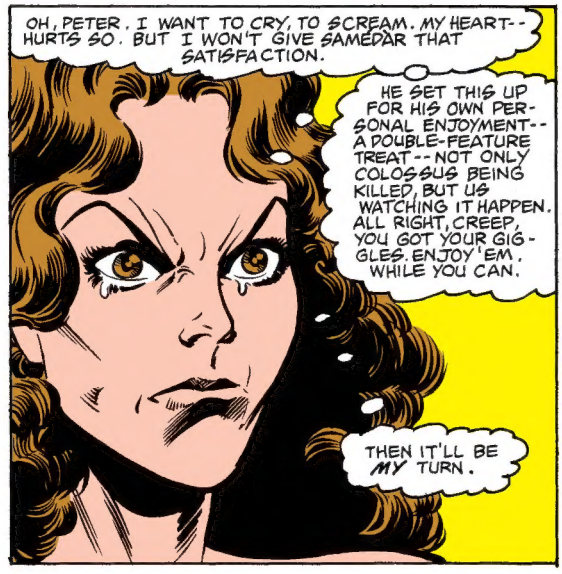

IT'S OUT OF OUR HANDS. ALL WE CAN DO IS WATCH AND WAIT.
AND PRAY.

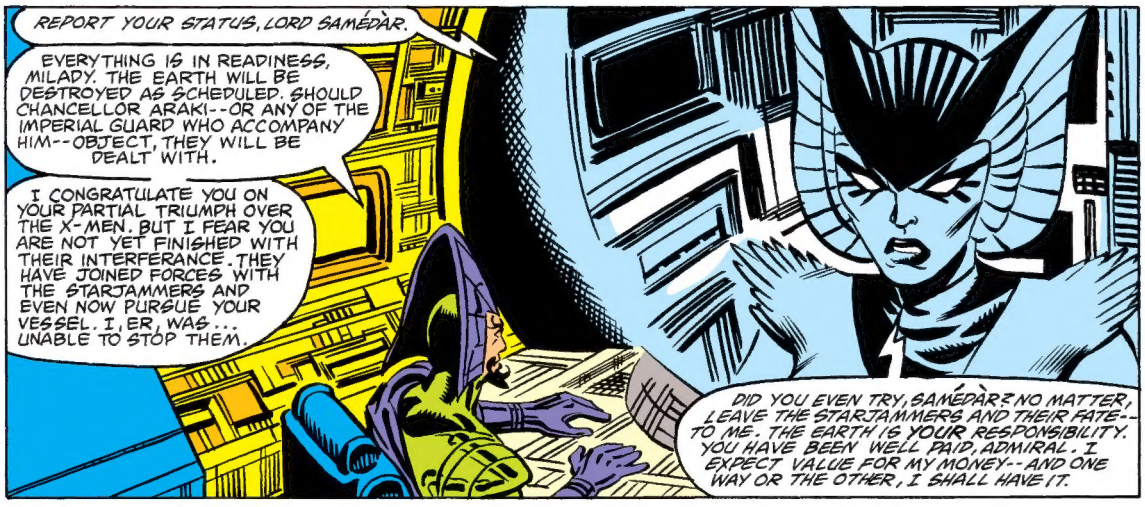

MEANWHILE, IN EARTH ORBIT, NIGHTCRAWLER AND KITTY PRYDE REMAIN AS HOSTAGES OF THE SHI'AR TASK FORCE SENT TO RESCUE EMPRESS LILANDRA, OR AVENGE HER.
HOW'S THIS, KURT?
KATZCHEN, YOU'VE BEEN PLAYING WITH THAT CLOTHES-MAKIN' "GIZMO" FOR HOURS. WILL YOU NEVER TIRE OF IT?
ARE YOU KIDDING? I'VE BARELY BEGUN TO EXPLORE ITS POSSIBILITIES. I MEAN, IS THIS OUTFIT SNAZZY OR WHAT? THINK IT'LL TURN A FEW HEADS?
I CAN THINK OF A FEW PLACES WHERE IT WILL GET YOU ARRESTED.
NO FOOLIN'?! WOW!
I ALSO THINK PETER WILL LOVE IT.
THAT'S THE IDEA.
I'M HERE TO RELIEVE YOU, SAPT. ANY PROBLEMS?
NONE. THEY ARE MODEL PRISONERS--THOUGH THE CHILD'S NON-STOP PRATTLE WILL PROBABLY EITHER BORE YOU TO DEATH...
...OR DRIVE YOU MAD. OR BOTH.
WITHIN THE CELL, A THREE-DIMENSIONAL HOLOGRAM FIELD SUDDENLY POPS TO LIFE...
GREETINGS, X-MEN. I TRUST YOUR ACCOMODATIONS ARE SATISFACTORY.
TO WHAT DO WE OWE THE HONOR OF YOUR CALL?
THEY'RE SPLENDID, ADMIRAL LORD SAMEDAR--FOR CELLS.
I THOUGHT YOU WOULD APPRECIATE AN UPDATE ON YOUR COMRADES' PROGRESS. THEIR FOE IS THE SHI'AR RENEGADE DEATHBIRD.
CORSAIR AND STORM WOULD MOST SURELY HAVE BEEN SLAIN HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR THE X-MEN'S TIMELY ARRIVAL.
I'LL BET YOU WERE HEART-BROKEN TO SEE THAT, YOU CREEP.
THEY QUICKLY--PAINFULLY--LEARNED THAT DEATHBIRD WAS NOT ALONE.
COLOSSUS HAS BEEN HIT!
KURT--THAT'S ACID! IT'S EATING RIGHT THROUGH HIS ARMORED BODY!

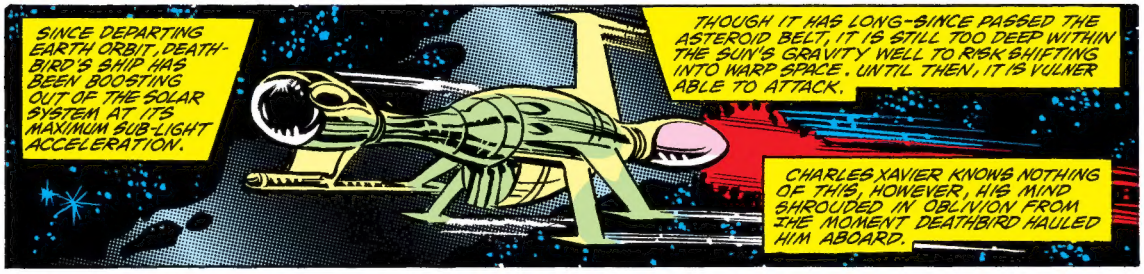
LOOK! STORM'S USING A COMBINATION OF LIGHTNING BOLTS AND MONSOON RAIN BLASTS TO VAPORIZE THE ACID AND WASH IT OFF! PETER'S OKAY!
WAY TO GO, ORORO!
STORM AND THE OTHERS RACE INTO THE BUILDING WHERE DEATHBIRD'S COHORTS ARE HIDING--LEAVING THE STILL-WEAK COLOSSUS TO GUARD PROFESSOR X. AND THEN...

AARRRGH!!
PETER!


WHY DID YOU STOP THE TAPE?! WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?!?
REGRETTABLY, I DO NOT KNOW. A MALFUNCTION PREVENTED OUR RECORDING OF ANY SUBSEQUENT EVENTS.
IS COLOSSUS DEAD OR ALIVE? YOU MUST KNOW THAT!
THE ADMIRAL'S ONLY ANSWER IS A SLIGHT SMILE, AND A SHAKE OF THE HEAD, BEFORE THE HOLOFIELD GOES BLANK.


OH, PETER. I WANT TO CRY, TO SCREAM. MY HEART--HURTS SO. BUT I WON'T GIVE SAMEDAR THAT SATISFACTION.
HE SET THIS UP FOR HIS OWN PERSONAL ENJOYMENT--A DOUBLE-FEATURE TREAT--NOT ONLY COLOSSUS BEING KILLED, BUT US WATCHING IT HAPPEN. ALL RIGHT, CREEP, YOU GOT YOUR GIGGLES. ENJOY 'EM, WHILE YOU CAN.
THEN IT'LL BE MY TURN.


REPORT YOUR STATUS, LORD SAMÉDÀR.
EVERYTHING IS IN READINESS, MILADY. THE EARTH WILL BE DESTROYED AS SCHEDULED. SHOULD CHANCELLOR ARAKI--OR ANY OF THE IMPERIAL GUARD WHO ACCOMPANY HIM--OBJECT, THEY WILL BE DEALT WITH.
I CONGRATULATE YOU ON YOUR PARTIAL TRIUMPH OVER THE X-MEN. BUT I FEAR YOU ARE NOT YET FINISHED WITH THEIR INTERFERANCE. THEY HAVE JOINED FORCES WITH THE STARJAMMERS AND EVEN NOW PURSUE YOUR VESSEL. I, ER, WAS... UNABLE TO STOP THEM.
DID YOU EVEN TRY, SAMÉDÀR? NO MATTER, LEAVE THE STARJAMMERS AND THEIR FATE--TO ME. THE EARTH IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY. YOU HAVE BEEN WELL PAID, ADMIRAL. I EXPECT VALUE FOR MY MONEY--AND ONE WAY OR THE OTHER, I SHALL HAVE IT.



BUT AS THE DRUGS BEGIN TO WEAR OFF, AS HIS SYSTEM INSTINCTIVELY FIGHTS THEIR EFFECTS...

...IMAGES SKITTER ACROSS HIS CONSCIOUSNESS.

HE IS A TELEPATH AND AS SUCH, IT IS NATURAL FOR HIS MIND--AND ITS PSI-SENSES--TO WAKE BEFORE HIS BODY. HIS QUESTING THOUGHTS REACH OUT TO A FRIEND...

...AND EMBRACE A NIGHTMARE, A FIEND FROM THE ABYSS.

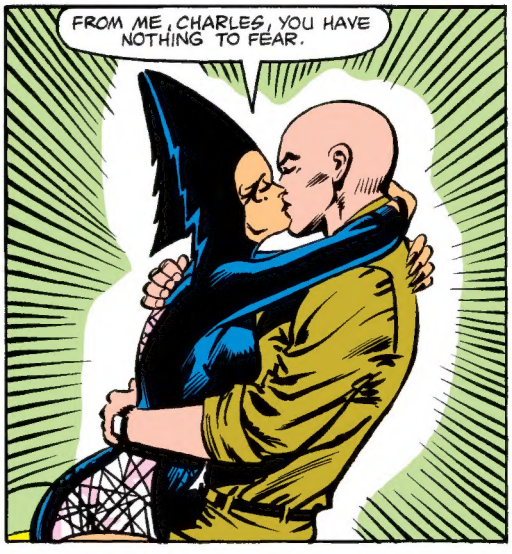
HE CRIES OUT, HIS SCREAM CHOKING IN HIS THROAT AS HIS EYES FLY OPEN--

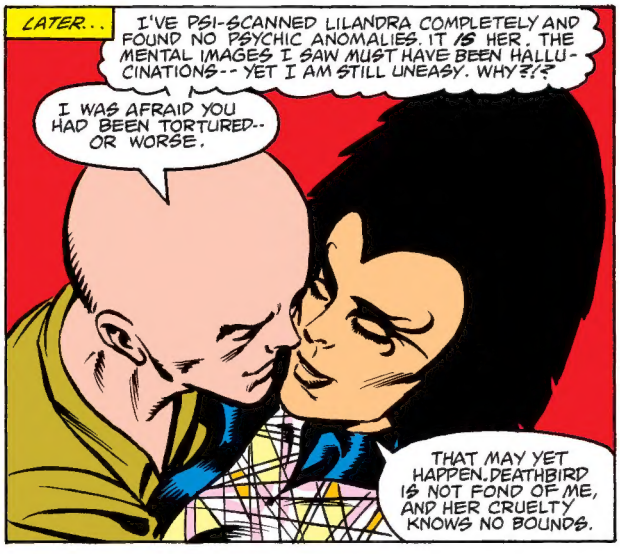
--TO BEHOLD THE FACE OF THE WOMAN HE LOVES.

LIL...LILANDRA... IS IT... YOU?

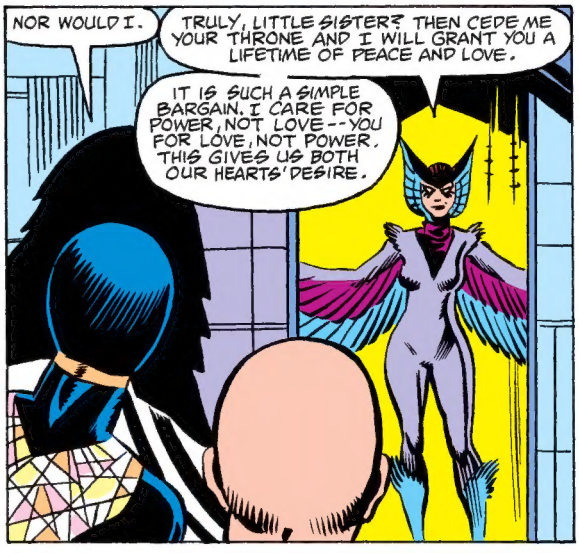
IN MY MIND, I SAW... HORRIBLE--ALIEN--SO... EVIL. I SENSED SUCH HATRED, SUCH INSATIABLE HUNGER...

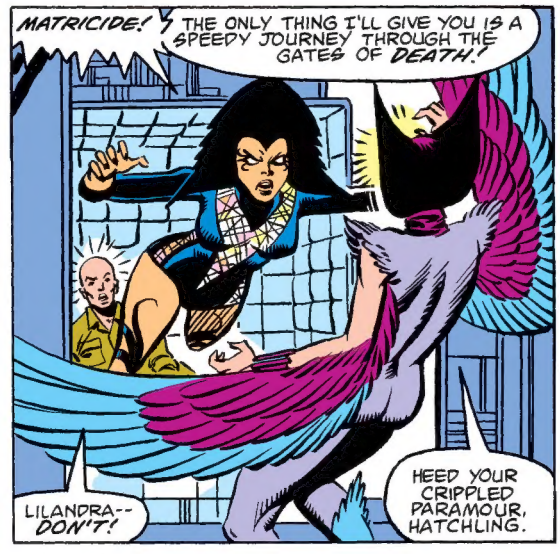
IT WAS A DREAM, BELOVED, A SIDE-EFFECT OF THE DRUGS YOU WERE GIVEN. I AM HERE. I AM REAL.



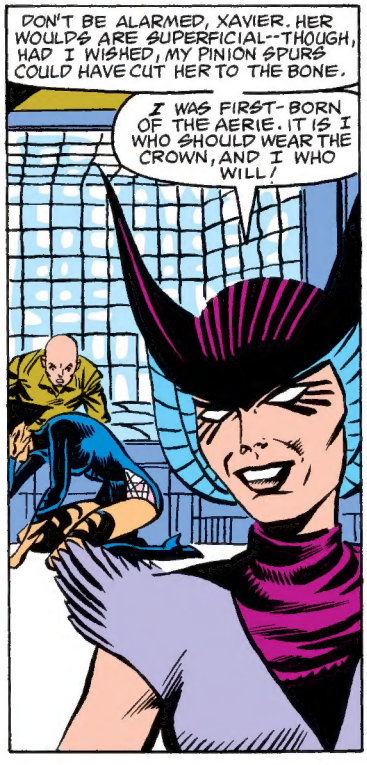


SHE BOASTED OF SLAYING COLOSSUS. I WOULD GIVE ANYTHING TO CHANGE THAT.
AH, CHARLES, I HAVE BROUGHT YOU NOTHING BUT MISERY. BECAUSE OF ME, JEAN GREY--AND NOW COLOSSUS--HAVE PERISHED, AND I FEAR MORE OF YOUR STUDENTS MAY JOIN THEM BEFORE THIS FIGHT IS DONE.
THERE ARE TIMES I WISH WE HAD NEVER MET, NEVER LOVED.
AS THERE ARE TIMES I MARVEL AT THE GOOD FORTUNE WHICH BROUGHT US TOGETHER, I, TOO, MOURN FOR THOSE WE HAVE LOST. BUT FOR ALL THE GRIEF THAT HAS FOLLOWED US--THAT MAY YET FOLLOW US--I WOULD NOT EXCHANGE OUR LOVE FOR ANYTHING.

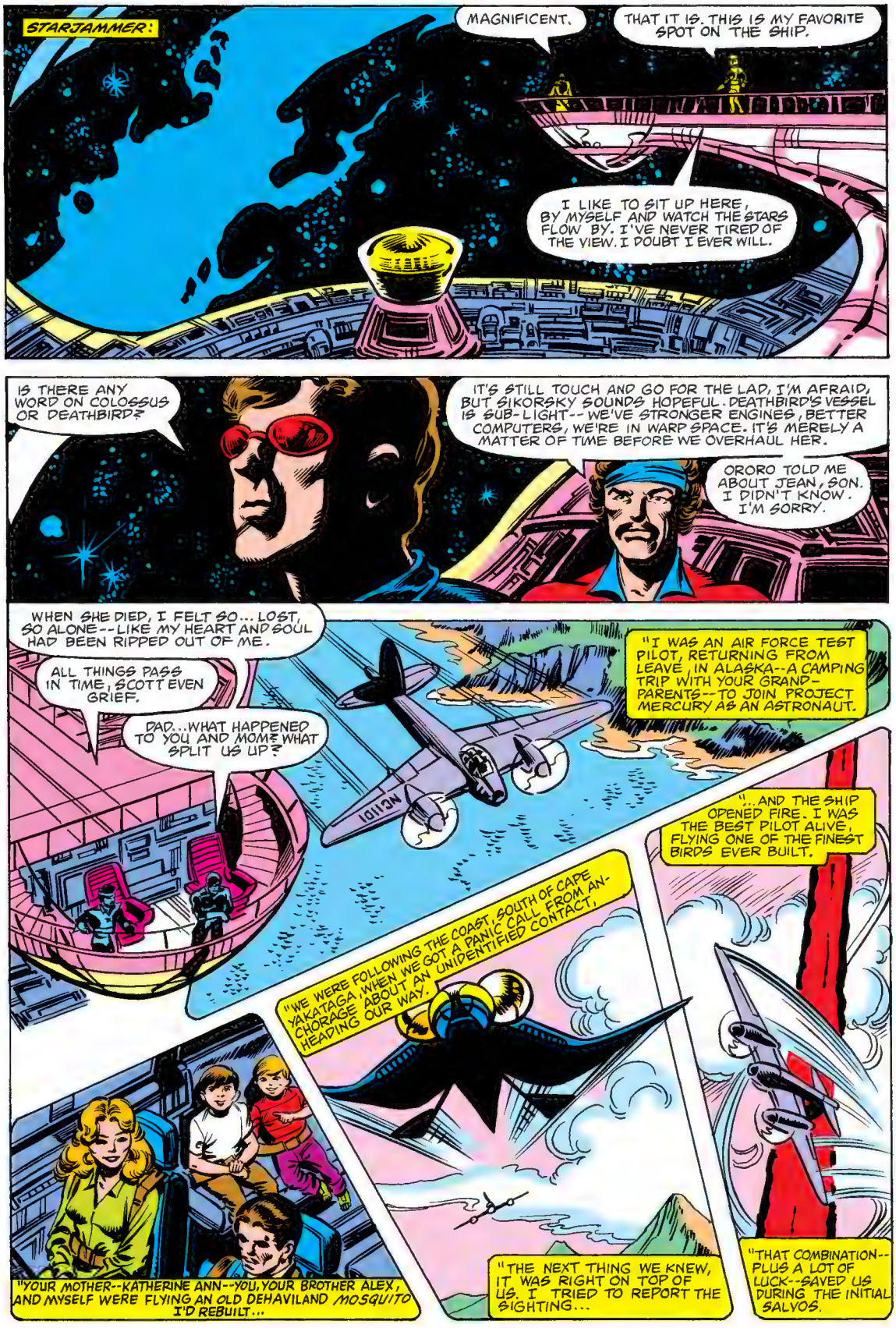

NOR WOULD I.
TRULY, LITTLE SISTER? THEN CEDE ME YOUR THRONE AND I WILL GRANT YOU A LIFETIME OF PEACE AND LOVE.
IT IS SUCH A SIMPLE BARGAIN. I CARE FOR POWER, NOT LOVE--YOU FOR LOVE, NOT POWER. THIS GIVES US BOTH OUR HEARTS' DESIRE.


MATRICIDE!
THE ONLY THING I'LL GIVE YOU IS A SPEEDY JOURNEY THROUGH THE GATES OF DEATH!
LILANDRA--DON'T!
HEED YOUR CRIPPLED PARAMOUR, HATCHLING.

ON THE BEST DAY OF YOUR PATHETIC LIFE, YOU WERE NEVER A MATCH FOR ME.
¿GNNNGNH!?
NO!


DON'T BE ALARMED, XAVIER. HER WOULDS ARE SUPERFICIAL--THOUGH, HAD I WISHED, MY PINION SPURS COULD HAVE CUT HER TO THE BONE.
I WAS FIRST-BORN OF THE AERIE. IT IS I WHO SHOULD WEAR THE CROWN, AND I WHO WILL!

SO DEATHBIRD IS SHI'AR?
AYE. FOR HER UNFORGIVEABLE CRIME, SHE WAS STRIPPED OF RANK AND NAME, CAST OUT OF AERIE FOREVER. AS A HATCHLING I WORSHIPPED HER.
I AM MAJESTRIX SHI'AR. AS LONG AS I LIVE, SHE CANNOT BECOME EMPRESS.


STARJAMMER:
MAGNIFICENT.
THAT IT IS. THIS IS MY FAVORITE SPOT ON THE SHIP.
I LIKE TO SIT UP HERE, BY MYSELF AND WATCH THE STARS FLOW BY. I'VE NEVER TIRED OF THE VIEW. I DOUBT I EVER WILL.
IS THERE ANY WORD ON COLOSSUS OR DEATHBIRD?
IT'S STILL TOUCH AND GO FOR THE LAD, I'M AFRAID, BUT SIKORSKY SOUNDS HOPEFUL. DEATHBIRD'S VESSEL IS SUB-LIGHT-- WE'VE STRONGER ENGINES, BETTER COMPUTERS, WE'RE IN WARP SPACE. IT'S MERELY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE WE OVERHAUL HER.
ORORO TOLD ME ABOUT JEAN, SON. I DIDN'T KNOW. I'M SORRY.
WHEN SHE DIED, I FELT SO... LOST, SO ALONE--LIKE MY HEART AND SOUL HAD BEEN RIPPED OUT OF ME.
ALL THINGS PASS IN TIME, SCOTT EVEN GRIEF.
DAD...WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU AND MOM? WHAT SPLIT US UP?
"I WAS AN AIR FORCE TEST PILOT, RETURNING FROM LEAVE, IN ALASKA--A CAMPING TRIP WITH YOUR GRAND-PARENTS--TO JOIN PROJECT MERCURY AS AN ASTRONAUT.
"...AND THE SHIP OPENED FIRE. I WAS THE BEST PILOT ALIVE, FLYING ONE OF THE FINEST BIRDS EVER BUILT.
"WE WERE FOLLOWING THE COAST, SOUTH OF CAPE YAKATAGA, WHEN WE GOT A PANIC CALL FROM ANCHORAGE ABOUT AN UNIDENTIFIED CONTACT, HEADING OUR WAY.
"YOUR MOTHER--KATHERINE ANN--YOU, YOUR BROTHER ALEX, AND MYSELF WERE FLYING AN OLD DEHAVILAND MOSQUITO I'D REBUILT...
"THE NEXT THING WE KNEW, IT WAS RIGHT ON TOP OF US. I TRIED TO REPORT THE SIGHTING...
"THAT COMBINATION--PLUS A LOT OF LUCK--SAVED US DURING THE INITIAL SALVOS.

"UNFORTUNATELY, THE *MOSQUITO* IS A WOODEN AIRCRAFT. THAT PROVED OUR UNDOING. A NEAR MISS TORCHED THE FUSELAGE AND THE DOGFIGHT WAS AS GOOD AS OVER.

"WE WERE OVER LAND ANN STRAPPED YOU INTO THE LONE PARACHUTE SHE COULD FIND, WRAPPED YOU AROUND YOUR LITTLE BROTHER...

"... AND SHOVED YOU BOTH OUT THE HATCH.

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"BUT THE SKY WAS FULL OF BLASTER FIRE. A BOLT CLIPPED YOUR 'CHUTE AND THE CANOPY STARTED TO BURN.

"HELPLESS, WE WATCHED YOU FALL, IMAGINING WE COULD HEAR YOUR SCREAMS.

"WE THOUGHT WE WOULD DIE, TOO...

"... UNTIL A TELEPORT BEAM YANKED US ABOARD THE STARSHIP.

"IT WAS A SHI'AR SCOUTING MISSION. TO THEM, ANNE AND I WERE ZOOLOGICAL SPECIMENS, REPRESENTING THE HIGHER ORDERS OF LIFE ON EARTH. WE WERE SEPARATED.

"ON THE IMPERIAL THRONEWORLD, I ESCAPED THE SLAVE PENS AND SET OUT TO FIND HER.

"SHE WAS WITH THE EMPEROR. MY MISTAKE THEN WAS IN TRYING TO KILL HIM WITH MY BARE HANDS INSTEAD OF SHOOTING HIM DOWN WHERE HE STOOD.

"GUARDS CAME TO HIS RESCUE. THEY WANTED TO EXECUTE ME ON THE SPOT...

...BUT D'KEN HAD OTHER IDEAS.

THIS FEMALE IS IMPORTANT TO YOU, BARBARIAN?

YES!

WOULD YOU... DIE FOR HER?

YES.

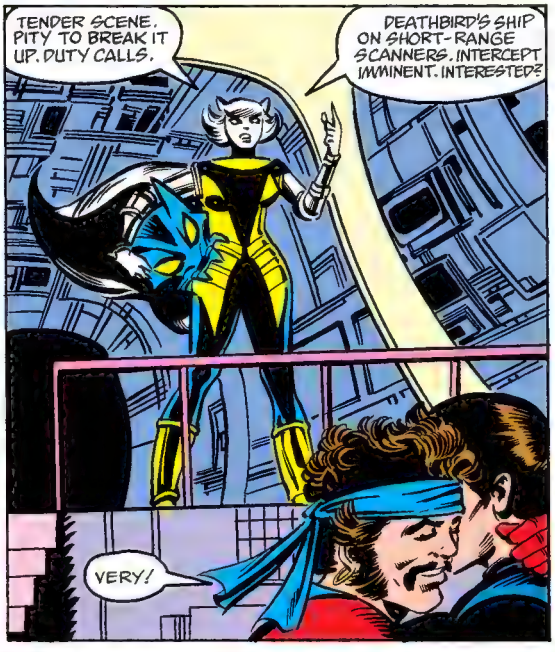
SUCH NOBLE SENTIMENTS. THE PENALTY FOR YOUR CRIMES IS DEATH BY SLOW TORTURE--BUT THAT IS TOO QUICK. I WANT YOU TO SUFFER, BARBARIAN.

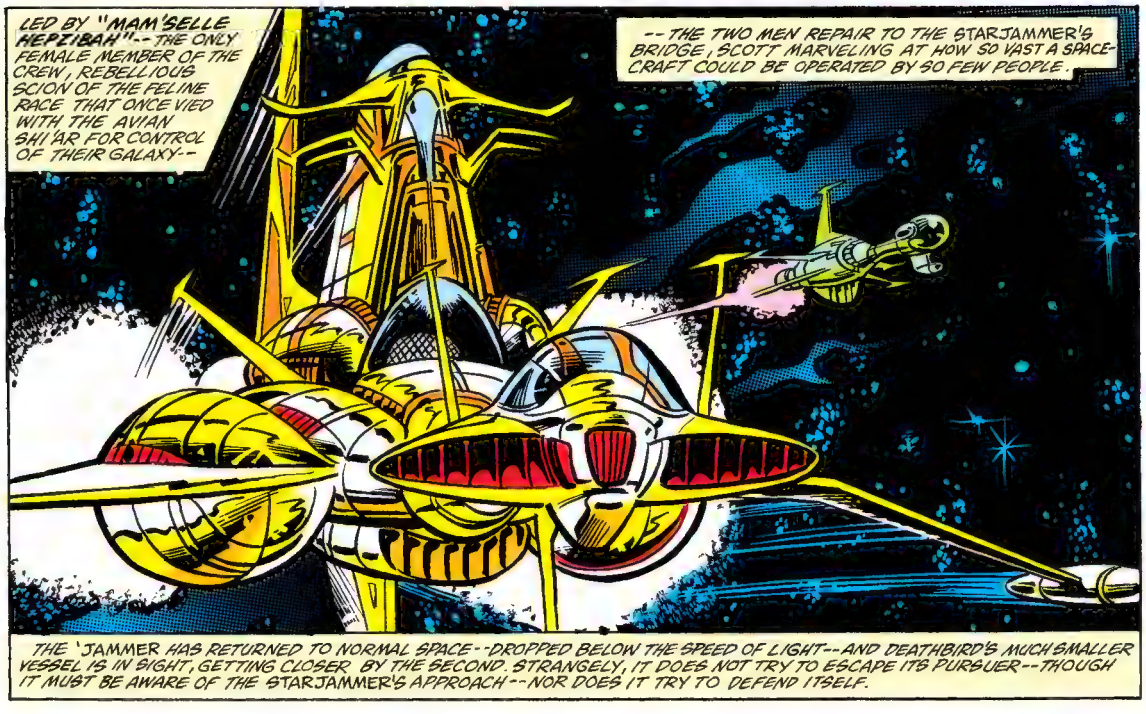
AND SUFFER YOU *SHALL*--BY REMEMBERING THIS MOMENT FOR THE REST OF YOUR DAYS!

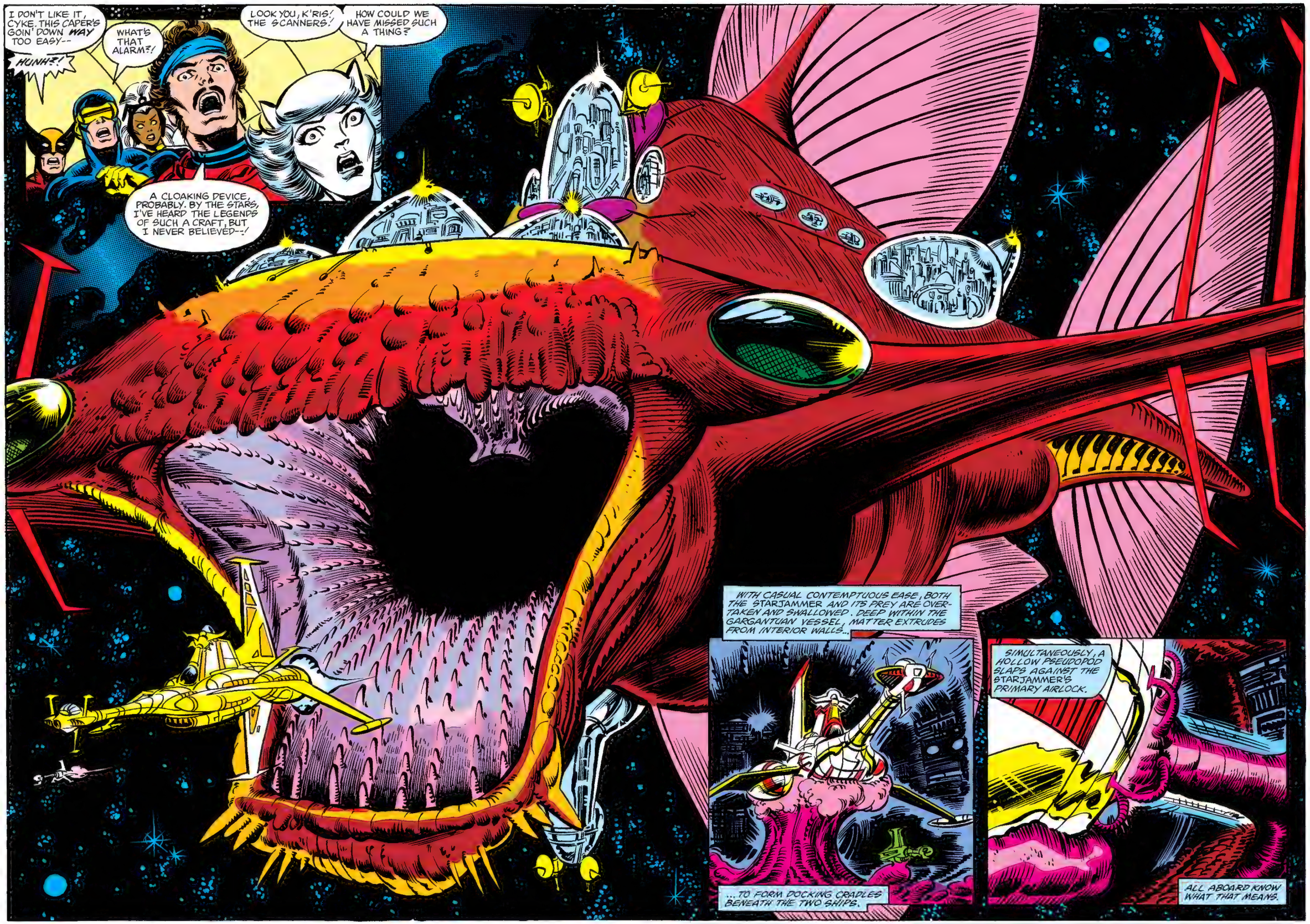
KATE!!

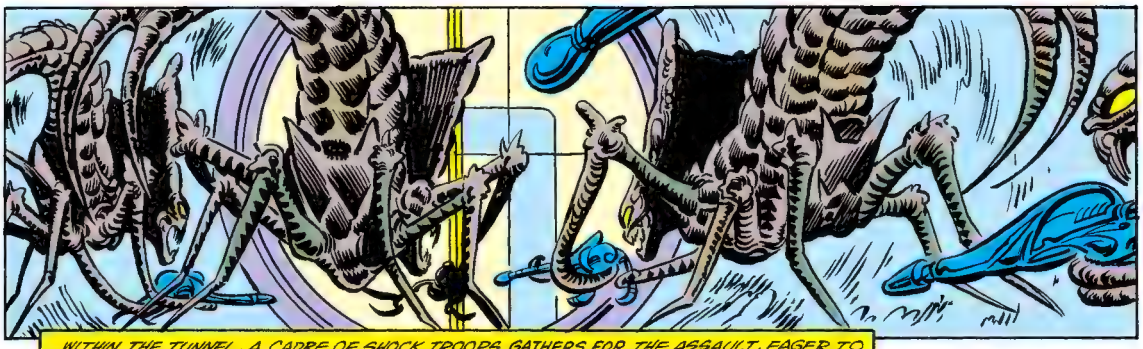
TWENTY YEARS AGO, SCOTT--YET THE MEMORY IS SO FRESH, SO VIVID, THAT SOMETIMES I FEEL LIKE IT'S JUST ONLY HAPPENED.
I WAS SENTENCED TO THE STAR PITS. THERE, I MET CH'OD, RAZA AND HEPZIBAH. WE BECAME COMRADES, THEN FRIENDS. EVENTUALLY, WE STOLE THE STARJAMMER AND ESCAPED. WE'VE BEEN FIGHTING THE EMPIRE EVER SINCE.
FIGHTING. I USED TO HATE IT. THAT'S WHY I BECAME A TEST PILOT, THEN JOINED NASA. I LOVED FLYING, LEARNING--NOT KILLING. I YEARNED TO BE A SCIENTIST, NOT A WARRIOR. LOOK AT ME NOW.

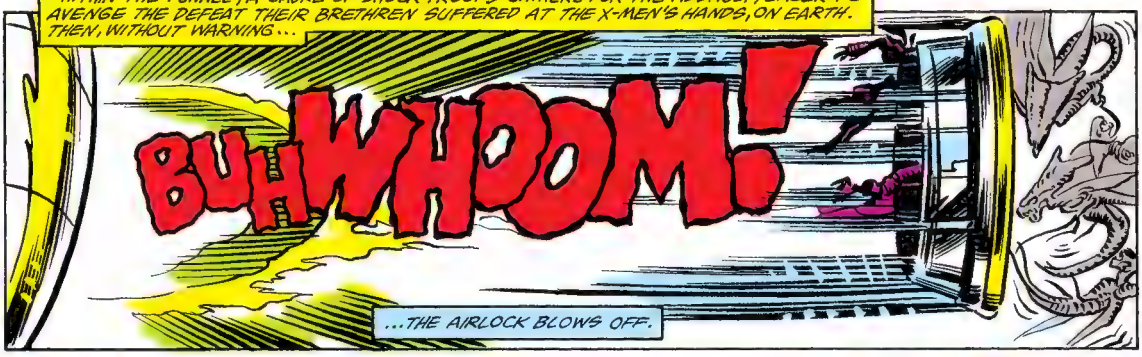
YOU WERE RIGHT, SCOTT, I'M NOT THE SAME MAN I WAS. PERHAPS I'M NOT VERY ADMIRABLE, EITHER. BUT I'M NOT ASHAMED OF WHAT I AM, OR WHAT I'VE DONE.
I UNDERSTAND, DAD--AT LEAST, I THINK I'M BEGINNING TO.
THANKS FOR TELLING ME.

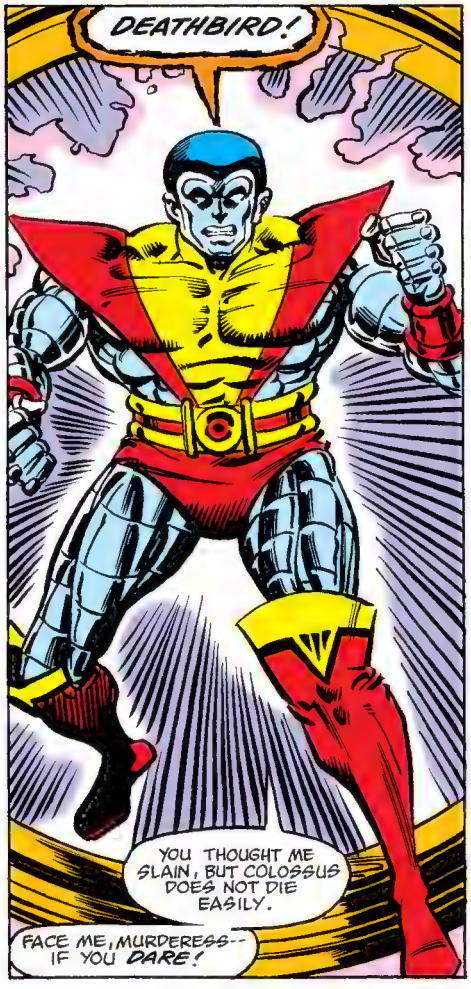

TENDER SCENE. PITY TO BREAK IT UP. DUTY CALLS.
DEATHBIRD'S SHIP ON SHORT-RANGE SCANNERS. INTERCEPT IMMINENT. INTERESTED?
VERY!

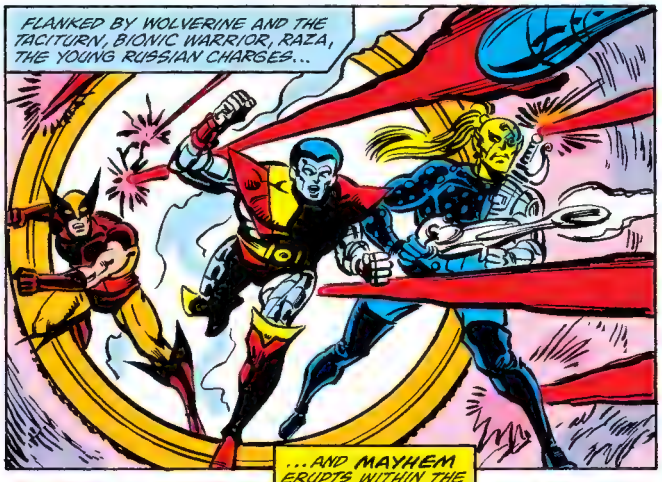

LED BY "MAM'SELLE HEPZIBAH"--THE ONLY FEMALE MEMBER OF THE CREW, REBELLIOUS SCION OF THE FELINE RACE THAT ONCE VIED WITH THE AVIAN SHI'AR FOR CONTROL OF THEIR GALAXY--
--THE TWO MEN REPAIR TO THE STARJAMMER'S BRIDGE, SCOTT MARVELING AT HOW SO VAST A SPACECRAFT COULD BE OPERATED BY SO FEW PEOPLE.
THE 'JAMMER HAS RETURNED TO NORMAL SPACE--DROPPED BELOW THE SPEED OF LIGHT--AND DEATHBIRD'S MUCH SMALLER VESSEL IS IN SIGHT, GETTING CLOSER BY THE SECOND. STRANGELY, IT DOES NOT TRY TO ESCAPE ITS PURSUER--THOUGH IT MUST BE AWARE OF THE STARJAMMER'S APPROACH--NOR DOES IT TRY TO DEFEND ITSELF.

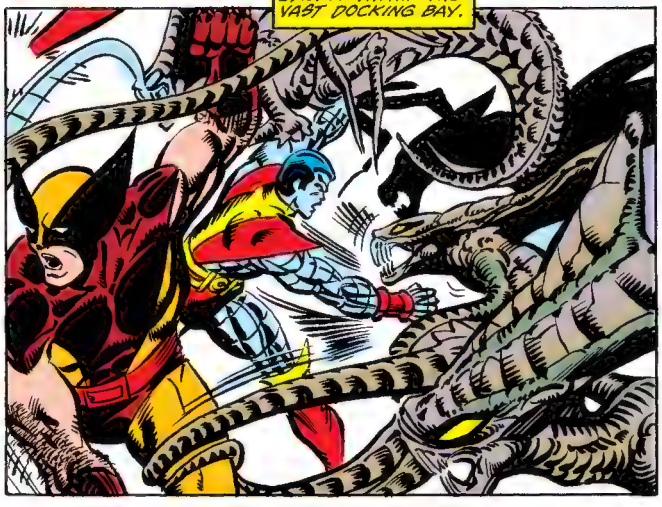

I DON'T LIKE IT, CYKE. THIS CAPER'S GOIN' DOWN WAY TOO EASY--
HUNH?!
WHAT'S THAT ALARM?!
LOOK YOU, K'RIS! THE SCANNERS!
HOW COULD WE HAVE MISSED SUCH A THING?
A CLOAKING DEVICE, PROBABLY. BY THE STARS, I'VE HEARD THE LEGENDS OF SUCH A CRAFT, BUT I NEVER BELIEVED--!
WITH CASUAL CONTEMPTUOUS EASE, BOTH THE STARJAMMER AND ITS PREY ARE OVERTAKEN AND SWALLOWED. DEEP WITHIN THE GARGANTUAN VESSEL, MATTER EXTRUDES FROM INTERIOR WALLS...
...TO FORM DOCKING CRADLES BENEATH THE TWO SHIPS.
SIMULTANEOUSLY, A HOLLOW PSEUDOPOD SLAPS AGAINST THE STARJAMMER'S PRIMARY AIRLOCK.
ALL ABOARD KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS.

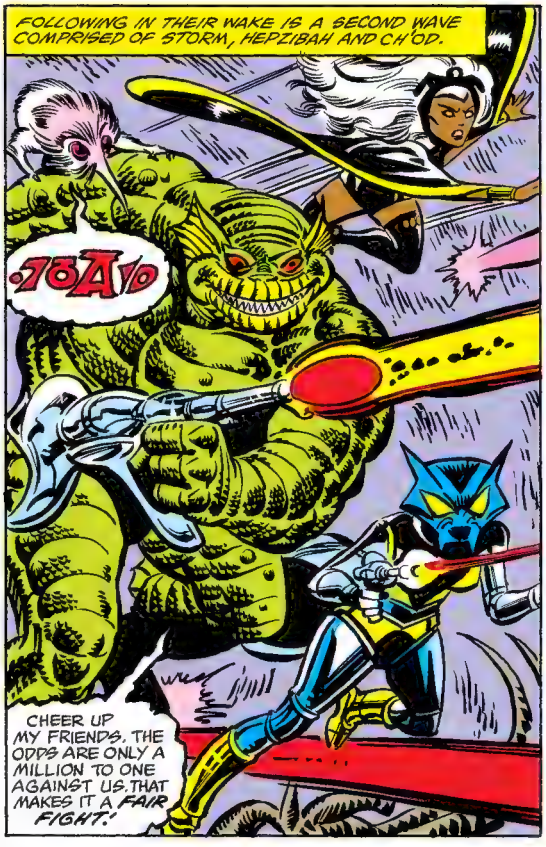



WITHIN THE TUNNEL, A CADRE OF SHOCK TROOPS GATHERS FOR THE ASSAULT, EAGER TO AVENGE THE DEFEAT THEIR BRETHREN SUFFERED AT THE X-MEN'S HANDS, ON EARTH. THEN, WITHOUT WARNING...
BUHWHOOM!
...THE AIRLOCK BLOWS OFF.

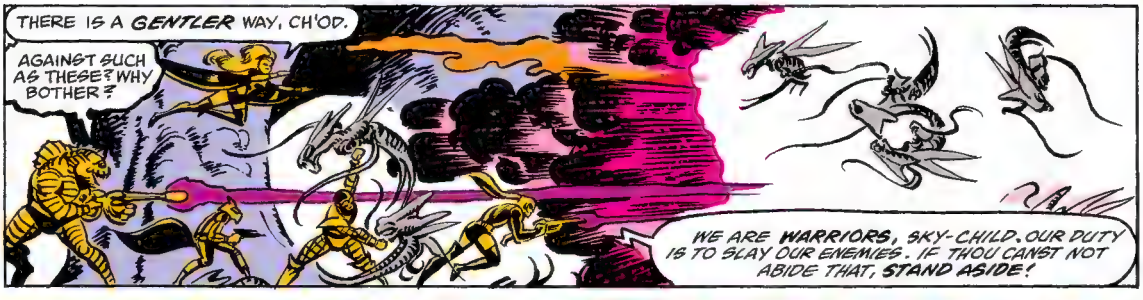

DEATHBIRD!
YOU THOUGHT ME SLAIN, BUT COLOSSUS DOES NOT DIE EASILY.
FACE ME, MURDERESS-- IF YOU DARE!

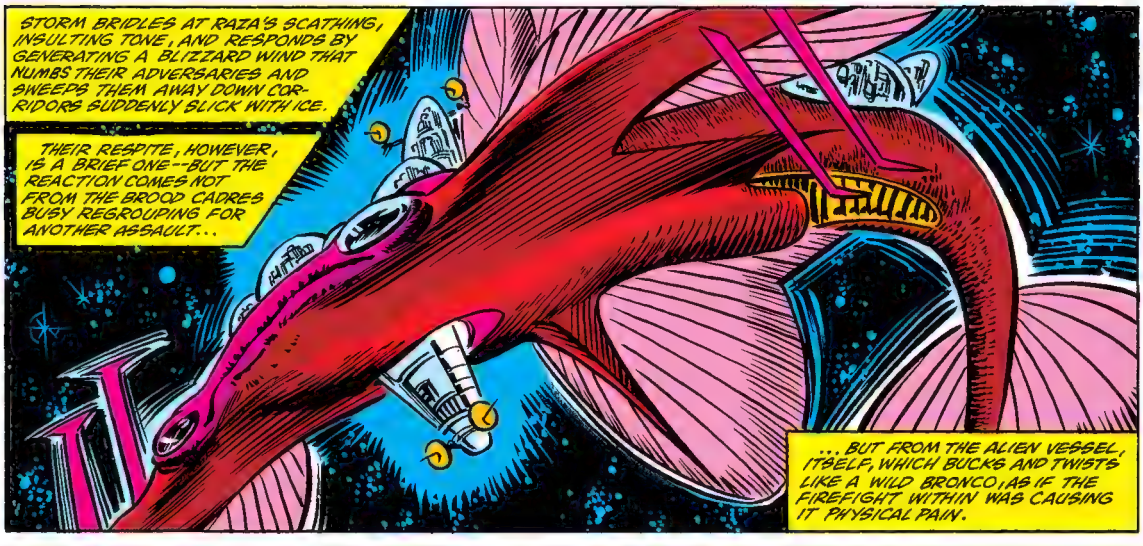

FLANKED BY WOLVERINE AND THE TACITURN, BIONIC WARRIOR, RAZA, THE YOUNG RUSSIAN CHARGES...


...AND MAYHEM ERUPTS WITHIN THE VAST DOCKING BAY.


FOLLOWING IN THEIR WAKE IS A SECOND WAVE COMPRISED OF STORM, HEPZIBAH AND CH'OD.
.73A/0
CHEER UP MY FRIENDS. THE ODDS ARE ONLY A MILLION TO ONE AGAINST US. THAT MAKES IT A FAIR FIGHT!

THESE CREATURES--THEIR VESSEL--REEK OF... EVIL! I'VE NEVER FELT SUCH INSTINCTIVE, NATURAL, ALL-ENCOMPASSING REPULSION. EVERY FIBRE OF MY BEING CRIES OUT FOR ME TO DESTROY THEM UTTERLY.
BUT I SHALL NOT! THEY ARE LIVING, SENTIENT BEINGS--NO MATTER HOW REPULSIVE--AND I AM PLEDGED NEVER TO TAKE A LIFE.
YOU HOLD BACK, WIND-RIDER. A NOBLE GESTURE. ALSO A MISTAKE. SHOW THE "BROOD" THE SAME MERCY THEY WOULD ACCORD YOU.


THERE IS A GENTLER WAY, CH'OD.
AGAINST SUCH AS THESE? WHY BOTHER?
WE ARE WARRIORS, SKY-CHILD. OUR DUTY IS TO SLAY OUR ENEMIES. IF THOU CANST NOT ABIDE THAT, STAND ASIDE!

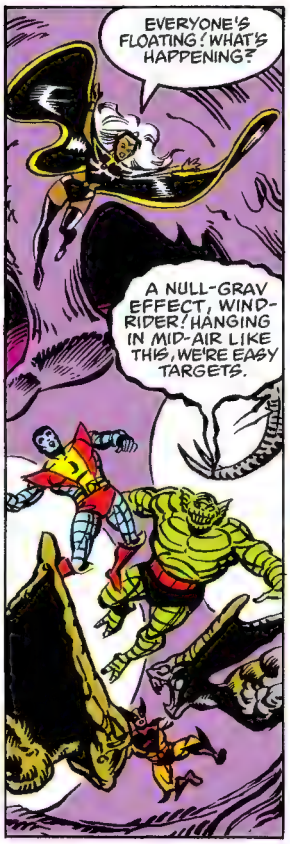

STORM BRIDLES AT RAZA'S SCATHING, INSULTING TONE, AND RESPONDS BY GENERATING A BLIZZARD WIND THAT NUMBS THEIR ADVERSARIES AND SWEEPS THEM AWAY DOWN CORRIDORS SUDDENLY SLICK WITH ICE.
THEIR RESPITE, HOWEVER, IS A BRIEF ONE--BUT THE REACTION COMES NOT FROM THE BROOD CADRES BUSY REGROUPING FOR ANOTHER ASSAULT...
... BUT FROM THE ALIEN VESSEL, ITSELF, WHICH BUCKS AND TWISTS LIKE A WILD BRONCO, AS IF THE FIREFIGHT WITHIN WAS CAUSING IT PHYSICAL PAIN.

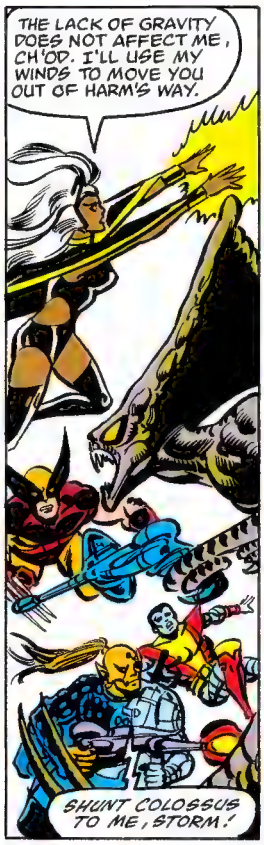
FAR FROM THE BATTLE, IN ONE OF THE DOMED CITIES THAT DOT THE VESSEL'S HULL...

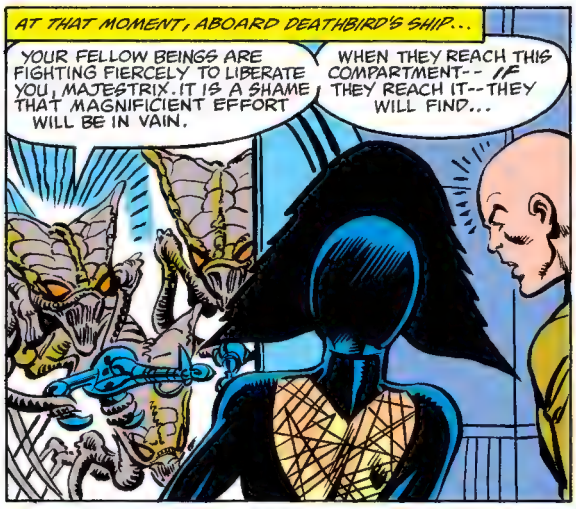
CLAN-MASTER, SHIP-SYSTEM CONTROL ELEMENTS APPROACH CRITICAL LEVELS. IT CANNOT WITHSTAND SUCH PUNISHMENT.

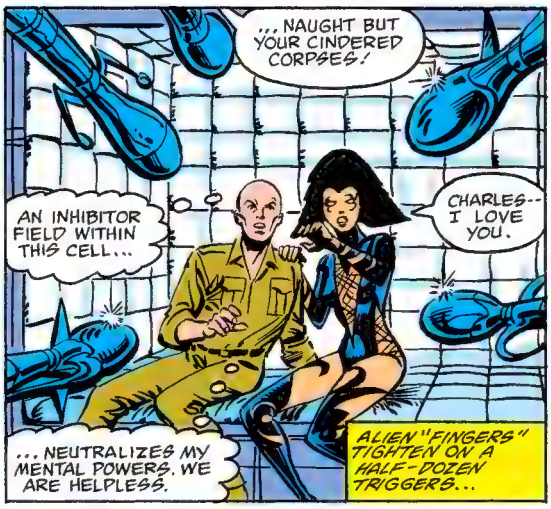
WHAT MANNER OF BEINGS DO WE FACE, HAEG'RILL, WHO ARE ABLE TO CAUSE SUCH DAMAGE?! I WANT THEM TAKEN ALIVE. SUCH FORMIDABLE ADVERSARIES MAY PROVE TO BE SPLENDID HOSTS FOR THE MOTHER-QUEEN.

ESTABLISH A ***ZERO-GRAVITY*** ENVIRONMENT IN THE COMBAT ZONE. THAT SHOULD HAMPER THE MAMMALS' EFFECTIVENESS.



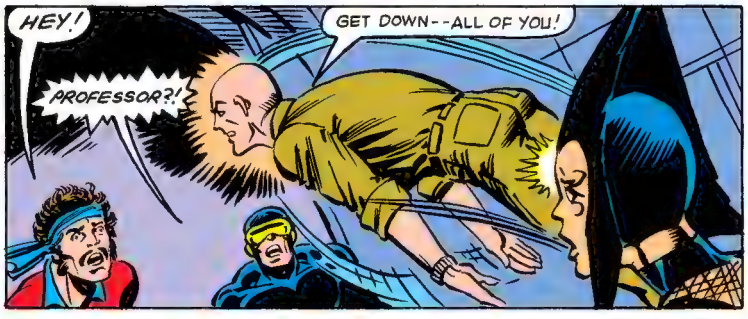


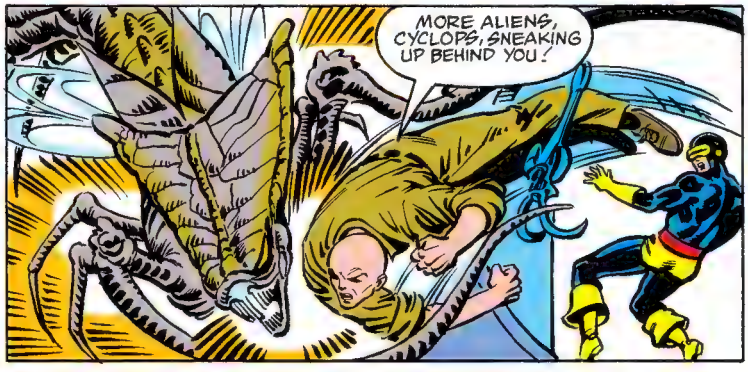

AT THAT MOMENT, ABOARD DEATHBIRD'S SHIP...
YOUR FELLOW BEINGS ARE FIGHTING FIERCELY TO LIBERATE YOU, MAJESTRIX. IT IS A SHAME THAT MAGNIFICIENT EFFORT WILL BE IN VAIN.
WHEN THEY REACH THIS COMPARTMENT-- IF THEY REACH IT--THEY WILL FIND...


... NAUGHT BUT YOUR CINDERED CORPSES!
AN INHIBITOR FIELD WITHIN THIS CELL...
CHARLES-- I LOVE YOU.
... NEUTRALIZES MY MENTAL POWERS. WE ARE HELPLESS.
ALIEN "FINGERS" TIGHTEN ON A HALF-DOZEN TRIGGERS...

... BUT THE WEAPONS ARE NEVER FIRED.
KRAK!
AAIIIII!!

PROFESSOR, ARE YOU--?!
CYCLOPS! THANK HEAVEN!
I'M GLAD TO SEE YOU, LAD, THOUGH I SUSPECT YOUR TIMING COULD HAVE BEEN A BIT IMPROVED.
CORSAIR!
AT YOUR SERVICE, MAJESTRIX. FOR THE PRESENT.

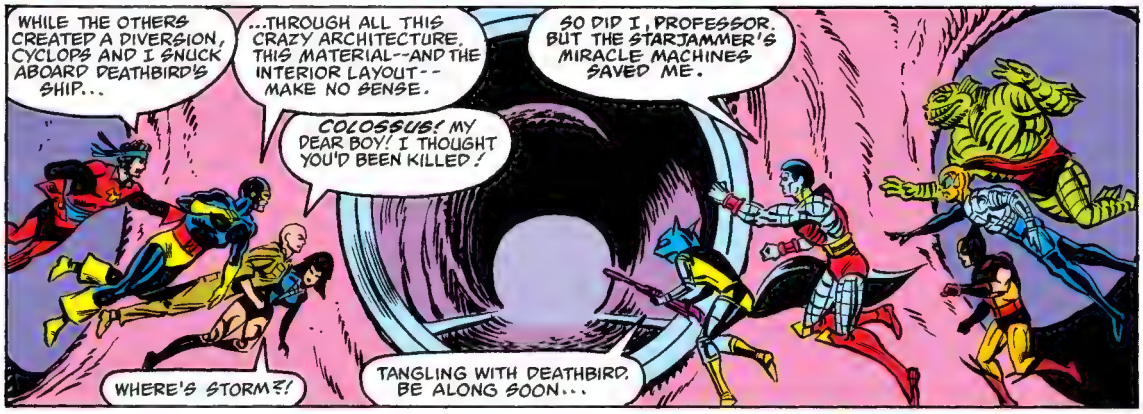

HEY!
PROFESSOR?!
GET DOWN--ALL OF YOU!

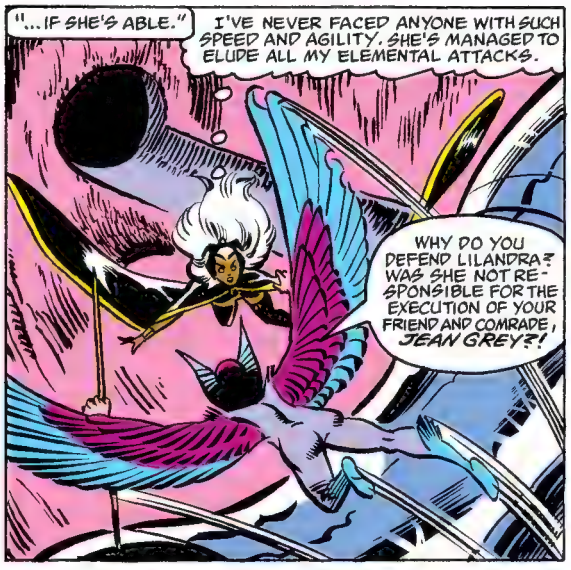

MORE ALIENS, CYCLOPS, SNEAKING UP BEHIND YOU!

A WARNING WOULD HAVE SUFFICED, PROFESSOR.
OUTSIDE THE CELL, I'M FREE OF THE INHIBITOR FIELD. MY POWERS HAVE RETURNED!
I CAN STUN MY FOES WITH A PSI-BOLT. AND IN ZERO-GRAVITY, I CAN MANEUVER AS WELL AS ANYONE. MY CRUSHED LEGS ARE NO LONGER A SERIOUS HANDICAP.

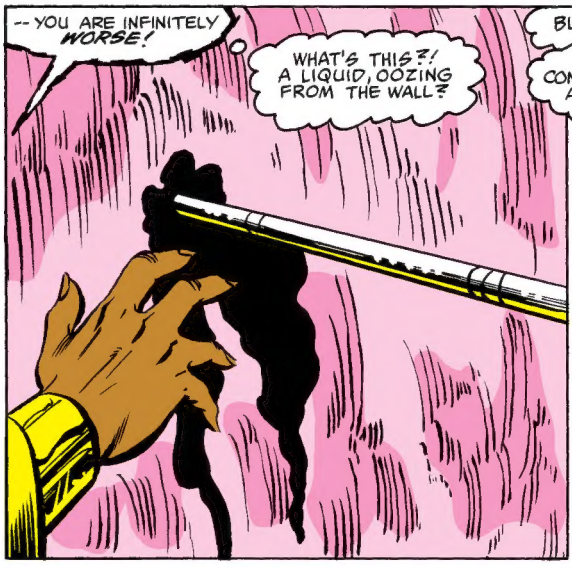
WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING, ATTACKING THOSE HORRORS WITH YOUR BARE HANDS?! THEY COULD HAVE RIPPED YOU TO SHREDS. YOU AREN'T TRAINED FOR THIS LINE OF WORK, CHARLES. WE ARE. LEAVE THE ROUGH STUFF TO US.
PERHAPS I ACTED HASTILY AND CARELESSLY, CYCLOPS, AND FOR THAT I APOLOGIZE. BUT THE CREATURES THREATENED ME...
...THREATENED THE WOMAN I LOVE.

I COULD NO LONGER SIT IDLY BY AND DO NOTHING. WHATEVER THE CONSEQUENCES, I HAD TO ACT.
IT WAS A SPLENDID--FOOLISH--GESTURE, MY LOVE.
AND I SHALL TREASURE IT FOREVER.
I CAN'T BLAME HIM, REALLY. IN HIS SHOES, I'D HAVE PROBABLY DONE THE SAME.


WHILE THE OTHERS CREATED A DIVERSION, CYCLOPS AND I SNUCK ABOARD DEATHBIRD'S SHIP...
...THROUGH ALL THIS CRAZY ARCHITECTURE. THIS MATERIAL--AND THE INTERIOR LAYOUT--MAKE NO SENSE.
SO DID I, PROFESSOR. BUT THE STARJAMMER'S MIRACLE MACHINES SAVED ME.
COLOSSUS! MY DEAR BOY! I THOUGHT YOU'D BEEN KILLED!
WHERE'S STORM?!
TANGLING WITH DEATHBIRD. BE ALONG SOON...

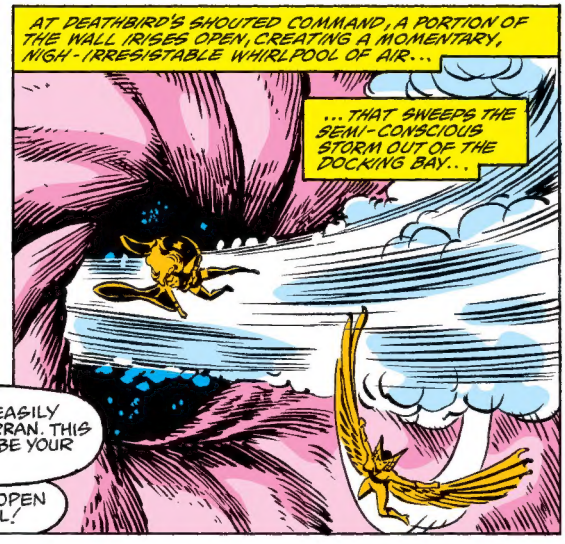

"...IF SHE'S ABLE."
I'VE NEVER FACED ANYONE WITH SUCH SPEED AND AGILITY. SHE'S MANAGED TO ELUDE ALL MY ELEMENTAL ATTACKS.
WHY DO YOU DEFEND LILANDRA? WAS SHE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE EXECUTION OF YOUR FRIEND AND COMRADE, JEAN GREY?!

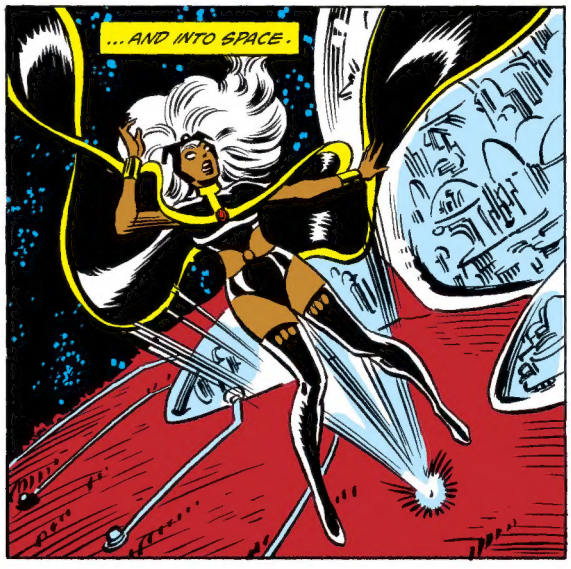
BY RIGHTS, WE SHOULD BE ALLIES AGAINST THE EMPIRE. WE ARE KINDRED SOULS, WINDRIDER. JOIN ME!
OR DIE!
IN NO WAY ARE WE ALIKE, DEATHBIRD. AND WHATEVER LILANDRA IS--GOOD OR BAD--

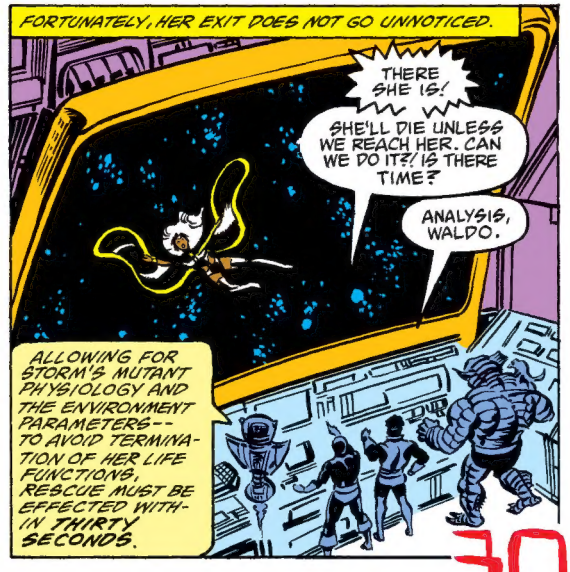

-- YOU ARE INFINITELY WORSE!
WHAT'S THIS?! A LIQUID, OOZING FROM THE WALL?

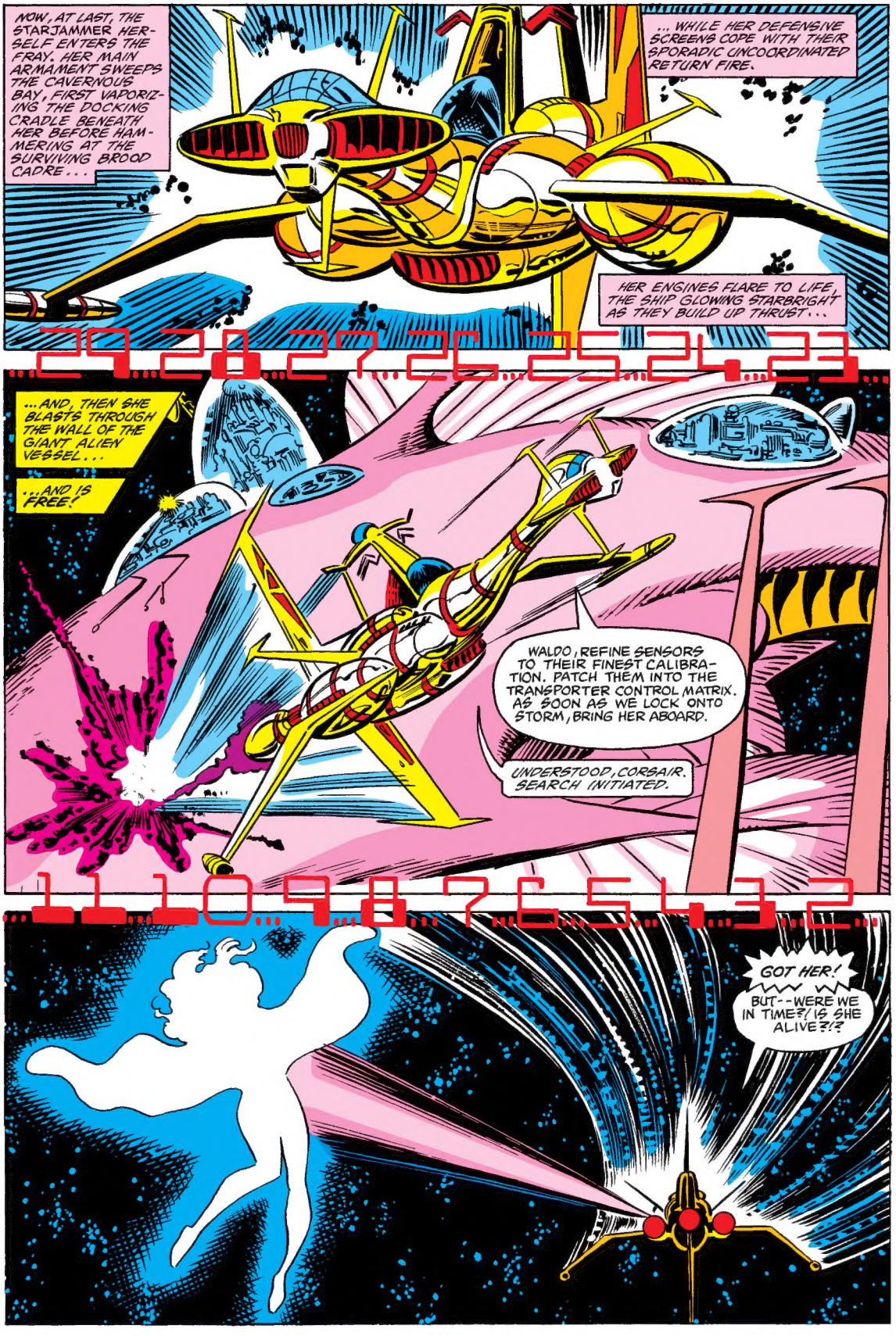
BLOOD.
THIS SHIP IS NO CONSTRUCT, NO MONSTROUS ALIEN MECHANISM.
GODDESS BE MERCIFUL-- THIS VESSEL IS A LIVING BEING!

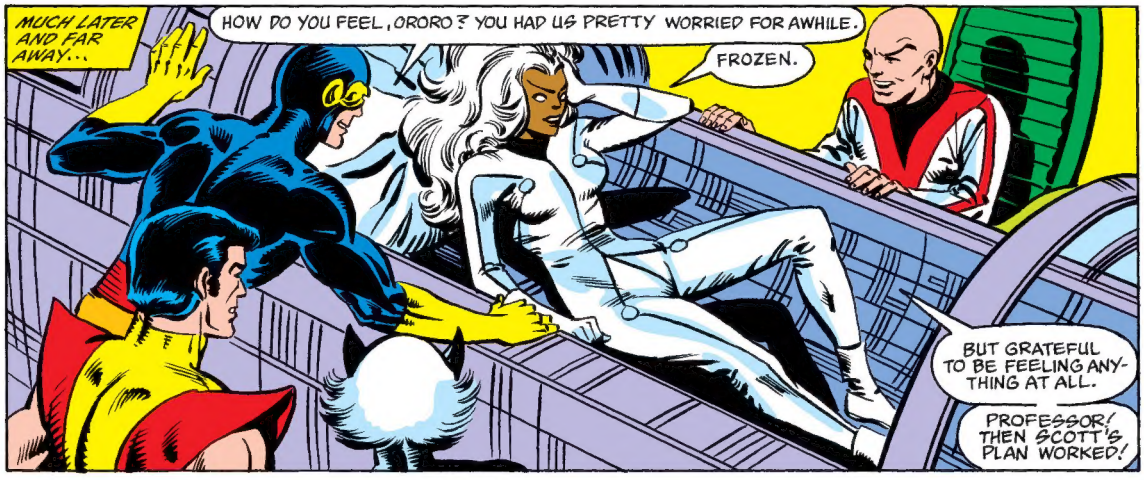
WHUNFF!
YOU ARE TOO EASILY DISTRACTED, TERRAN. THIS MISTAKE WILL BE YOUR LAST.
HAEG'RILL, OPEN THE PORTAL!

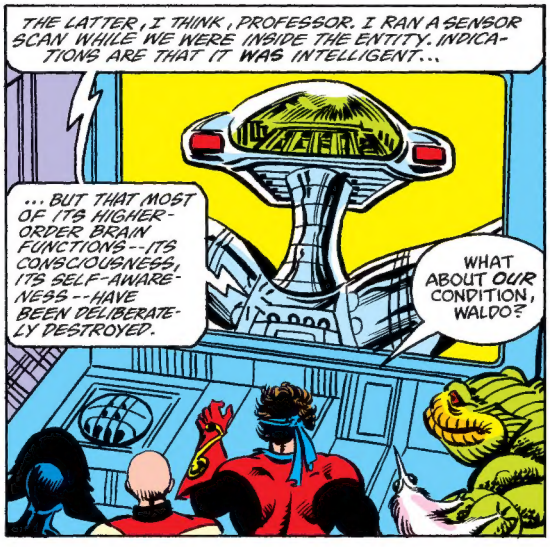

AT DEATHBIRD'S SHOUTED COMMAND, A PORTION OF THE WALL IRISES OPEN, CREATING A MOMENTARY, NIGH-IRRESISTABLE WHIRLPOOL OF AIR...
...THAT SWEEPS THE SEMI-CONSCIOUS STORM OUT OF THE DOCKING BAY...

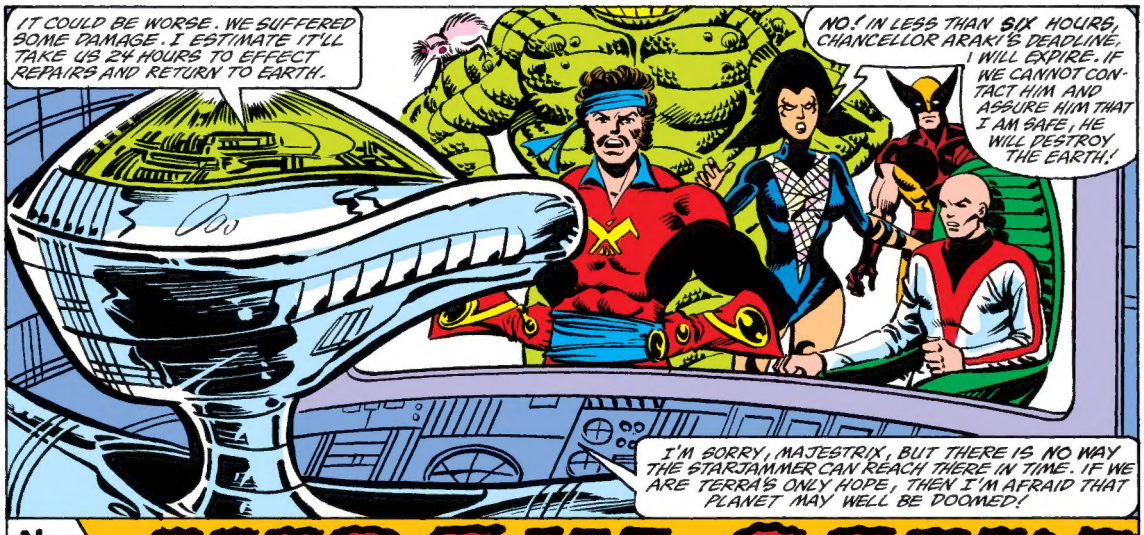

...AND INTO SPACE.


FORTUNATELY, HER EXIT DOES NOT GO UNNOTICED.
THERE SHE IS!
SHE'LL DIE UNLESS WE REACH HER. CAN WE DO IT?! IS THERE TIME?
ANALYSIS, WALDO.
ALLOWING FOR STORM'S MUTANT PHYSIOLOGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT PARAMETERS-- TO AVOID TERMINATION OF HER LIFE FUNCTIONS, RESCUE MUST BE EFFECTED WITHIN THIRTY SECONDS.


NOW, AT LAST, THE STARJAMMER HERSELF ENTERS THE FRAY. HER MAIN ARMAMENT SWEEPS THE CAVERNOUS BAY, FIRST VAPORIZING THE DOCKING CRADLE BENEATH HER BEFORE HAMMERING AT THE SURVIVING BROOD CADRE...
... WHILE HER DEFENSIVE SCREENS COPE WITH THEIR SPORADIC UNCOORDINATED RETURN FIRE.
HER ENGINES FLARE TO LIFE, THE SHIP GLOWING STARBRIGHT AS THEY BUILD UP THRUST...
29 28 27 26 25 24 23
...AND, THEN SHE BLASTS THROUGH THE WALL OF THE GIANT ALIEN VESSEL...
...AND IS FREE!
WALDO, REFINE SENSORS TO THEIR FINEST CALIBRATION. PATCH THEM INTO THE TRANSPORTER CONTROL MATRIX. AS SOON AS WE LOCK ONTO STORM, BRING HER ABOARD.
UNDERSTOOD, CORSAIR. SEARCH INITIATED.
11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2
GOT HER!
BUT--WERE WE IN TIME?! IS SHE ALIVE?!?







NEXT:

HIDE-'N-SEEK!

A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH!

MINUTEMEN

Sy13nt
Bob